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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/960,341	09/24/2001	Akihiro Komatsu	Q66198	4615

7590 03/16/2004

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EXAMINER
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GORDON, BRIAN R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1743

DATE MAILED: 03/16/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

## Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

09/960,341

**Applicant(s)**

KOMATSU, AKIHIRO

**Examiner**

Brian R. Gordon

**Art Unit**

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 September 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)                                   | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)             |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

**DETAILED ACTION**

***Priority***

1. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential structural cooperative relationships of elements, such omission amounting to a gap between the necessary structural connections. See MPEP § 2172.01. The omitted structural cooperative relationships are: there is no relationship provided to explain how the suction tip of claim 1 is related to the other elements of the quantitative suction apparatus. It appears as if applicant is using the tip in combination with a larger apparatus. However, it is not clear how the tip is combined with the other elements. Where is tip located in reference to the pump and the control unit? Is the tip attached to the pump, the control unit, or some other structure?

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States

only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5. Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Jacobs et al. US 2002/0081747.

Jacobs et al. disclose an apparatus and a method for mixing a liquid within a disposable aspirating probe tip so that most of the liquid is forced to move past a transition zone between two different inside diameters to cause rotational mixing. The apparatus and method can be used to provide agglutination of blood, which in turn can be used for blood typing. The probe tip can comprise a single integral piece, or two separate portions.

FIG. 3 illustrates certain preferred parameters for optimal mixing in general. Probe 112 has an aperture 134 and an exterior surface 136 adjacent to that aperture, similar to that of the prior art. However, the cross-sectional flow-through area  $A_2$  of cavity 118 (fixed volume chamber), provided by inside diameter  $D_2$ , is preferably no smaller than nine times that of the cross-sectional flow-through area  $A_1$  provided by inside diameter  $D_1$ , of cavity 114. Furthermore, the diameters  $D_1$  and  $D_2$  are generally constant so that their respective cavities are cylindrical. Thus,  $D_2$  is preferably at least equal to three times  $D_1$ .

Useful examples of  $D_1$  and  $D_2$  include, e.g., 0.8 mm and 3.2 mm, respectively, for use with a total height  $H_2$ , FIG. 5, of about 3 mm.

As seen in the Figure the upper portion of the cavity tapers inward to a division wall having a through hole of diameter  $D_1$ .

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FIG. 7A, probe portion 112A" comprises a conical cavity 118" extending from an aperture 134A", to an upper portion 132A" that connects to a pump, not shown, the inside diameter of cavity 118" increasing with increasing distance from the aperture. To allow the two portions 112A" and 112B" to join together, the exterior surface 136A" adjacent to aperture 134A" is enlarged, also with a tapered shape, such as by securing a cork collar to the rest of the portion 112A". The inside diameter at aperture 134A" is relatively small, e.g., about 1 mm.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

8. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein

were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

9. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacobs et al. as applied to claims 1-4 above, and further in view of Pelc et al. US 6,592,825.

Jacobs et al. does not disclose a control unit for detecting the suction pressure and termination of a suction operation upon detection of a change in suction pressure.

Pelc et al. disclose a microvolume liquid handling system including a microdispenser employing a piezoelectric transducer attached to a glass capillary, a positive displacement pump for priming and aspirating transfer liquid into the microdispenser, a controller for controlling the pressure of the liquid system, and means for washing the microdispenser between liquid transfers, and a pressure sensor to measure the liquid system pressure and produce a corresponding electrical signal. Dispensing of a single sub-nanoliter drop can be detected in real time. As the result of dispensing the liquid in sub-nanoliter droplets, the dispensed volume can be precisely controlled. The dispenser automatically detects the liquid surface of the transfer liquid, automatically aspirates, analyzes desired volume of the transfer liquid, dispenses the transfer liquid without contacting the destination vessel or its contents, and automatically washes off the transfer liquid from dispensing system after each transfer. This system is capable of automatically sensing liquid surfaces, aspirating liquid to be

transferred, and then dispensing small quantities of liquid with high accuracy, speed and precision.

The pressure sensor 14 senses fluctuations in pressure associated with priming the microvolume liquid handling system 10, aspirating transfer liquid 24 with pump 12, dispensing droplets 26 with microdispenser 16, and washing of microdispenser 16 using pump 12.

The device comprises a control logic 42 that instructs pump 12 to move the plunger 34 down in order to aspirate transfer liquid 24 into the microdispenser 16. The pressure signal is monitored by control logic 42 during the aspiration to ensure that the transfer liquid 24 is being successfully drawn into the microdispenser 16. If a problem is detected, such as an abnormal drop in pressure due to partial or total blockage of the microdispenser, the control logic 24 will send a stop movement command to the pump 12. The control logic 24 will then proceed with an encoded recovery algorithm. Note that transfer liquid 24 can be drawn into the microvolume liquid handling system 10 up to the pressure sensor 14 without threat of contaminating the pressure sensor 14. Additional tubing can be added to increase transfer liquid 24 capacity. Once the transfer liquid 24 has been aspirated into the microdispenser 16, the control logic 42 instructs the robotic system 58 to reposition the microdispenser 16 above the chosen target, e.g., a microtitre plate.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the device of Jacobs et al. to include the pressure sensor and

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control logic of Pelc et al. in order to aspirate liquid to be transferred and dispense small quantities of liquid with high accuracy, speed and precision.

**Conclusion**


10. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Jacobs et al., Nishimura, Zabetakis et al., Mann et al., Feygin, Papen, Siddiqui et al., Dorenkott et al., (,320 and ,269), Holl et al., Wihelmsen and Schmitt et al. disclose aspirating and dispensing devices.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Brian R. Gordon whose telephone number is 571-272-1258. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, with 2nd and 4th F off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jill Warden can be reached on 571-272-1267. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

brg

  
Jill Warden  
Supervisory Patent Examiner  
Technology Center 1700



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